**How to Steal the Human Rights of Aboriginal People**  
The art of denying Aboriginal people their human rights has been refined to a science. The following is a list of commonly used techniques -  
  
Gain the Aboriginal person’s co-operation - It is much easier to steal someone's human rights if you can do it with their OWN co-operation. So..:  
  
**1.** Make him/her a non-person. Human rights are for people. Convince Aboriginal people that their ancestors were savages, that they were pagan, that blacks were drunkards. Make them wards of the government. Make a legal distinction, as in the old Protection Act, between Aborigines and persons. Write history books that tell half the story.  
  
**2.** Convince the blackfella that they should be patient, that these things take time. Tell them that we are making progress, and that progress takes time.  
  
3. Make them believe that things are being done for his own good. Tell them you're sure that after they have experienced your laws and actions that they will realise how good they are. Tell the Koori they have to take a little of the bad in order to enjoy the benefits you are conferring on them.  
  
4. Get some Aboriginal people to do the dirty work. There are always those who will act for you to the disadvantage of their own people. Just give them a little honour and praise. This is generally the function of land councils, "elders", and advisory councils: they have little legal power, but can handle the tough decisions such as welfare, allocation of housing, income management etc.  
  
5. Consult the Aboriginal people, but do not act on the basis of what you hear. Tell the blackfellas they have a voice and go through the motions of listening. Then interpret what you have heard to suit your own needs.  
  
6. Insist that the Aboriginal people "GO THROUGH PROPER CHANNELS." Make the channels and the procedures so difficult that they won't bother to do anything. When they discover what the proper channels are and become proficient at the procedures, change them.  
  
7. Make the Aboriginal people believe that you are working hard for them, putting in much overtime and at a great sacrifice, and imply that they should be appreciative. This is the ultimate skill in stealing human rights; when you obtain the thanks of your victims.  
  
8. Allow a few individuals to "MAKE THE GRADE" and then point to them as examples. Say that the 'HARDWORKERS" and the "GOOD" Aboriginals have made it, and that therefore it is a person's own fault if he doesn't succeed.  
  
9. Appeal to the Aboriginal person’s sense of fairness, and tell them that even though things are pretty bad it is not right for them to make strong protests. Keep the argument going on their form of protest and avoid talking about the real issue. Refuse to deal with them while they are protesting. Take all the fire out of their efforts.  
10. Encourage the Aborigines to take their case to court. This is very expensive, takes lots of time and energy and is very safe because laws are stacked against them. The court's ruling will defeat the Aborigine's cause, but makes them think they have obtained justice.  
  
11. Make the Aboriginal people believe that things could be worse, and that instead of complaining about the loss of human rights, to be grateful for the rights they do have. In fact, convince them that to attempt to regain a right they have lost is likely to jeopardise the few rights that they still have.  
  
12. Set yourself up as the protector of the Aborigine's human rights, and then you can choose to act only on those violations you wish to act upon. By getting successful on a few minor violations of human rights, you can point to these as examples of your devotion to his cause. The burglar who is also the doorman is the perfect combination.  
  
13. Pretend that the reason for the loss of human rights is for some other reason than the person is an Aboriginal. Tell them some of your best friends are Aborigines, and that their loss of rights is because of their housekeeping, their drinking, their clothing, ie their own dysfunction.  
  
14. Make the situation more complicated than is necessary. Tell the Aboriginal you will have to take a survey to find out how many other Aborigines are being discriminated against. Hire a group of sociologists and/or anthropologists to conduct a year-long research project.  
  
15. Insist on unanimity. Let the Aboriginal know that when all the Aborigines in their nation can make up their minds about just what they want as a group, then you will act. Play one group's special situation against another group's wishes.  
  
16. Select very limited alternatives, none of which have much merit, and then tell the Aborigines that indeed they have a choice. For instance, ask if they would rather have council elections in June or December, instead of asking if they want them at all.  
  
17. Convince the Aboriginal people that their strongest leaders are dangerous and not to be trusted. Or simply lock them up on some charge like driving with no lights. Or refuse to listen to the real leaders and spend much time with the weak ones. Keep the people split from their leaders by sowing rumour. Try and get the best leaders into high paying jobs where they have to keep quiet in order to keep their paycheque coming in.  
  
18. Speak of the common good. Tell the Aboriginals that you can't consider yourselves when there is a whole nation to think of. Tell them that they can't think only of themselves. For instance, in regard to mining, tell them we have to think of the ‘national interest’.  
  
19. Remove rights so gradually that people don't realize what has happened until it is too late.

20. Rely on some reason and logic (your reason and logic) instead of rightness and morality. Give thousands of reasons for things, but do not get trapped into arguments about what is right.  
  
21. Hold a conference on HUMAN RIGHTS, and let everyone blow off steam and tension, and then go home happy, knowing things are well in hand.

**Note:** This is an adaptation of a speech given by Gerry Gambill at a conference on Human Rights at Tobique Reserve in New Brunswick, Canada in August, 1958. Gambill was non-Native Canadian who was adopted into the Mohawk nation given the name *Rarihokwats*. He became the first editor on the famous Mohawk newspaper *Akwesasne Notes* in 1968. Gambill had been employed as a community assistance worker in the Canadian Department of Indian Affairs and was fired in 1967, but not before he had gained powerful insights into the way in which government agencies function to control Aboriginal peoples.

In his 1958 speech, he warned native peoples about how those agencies go about taking away the human rights of native peoples. In my adaptation of his speech I have only changed the context to Australia, because it is an almost identical situation.

**Gary Foley** with acknowledgements to **Gerry Gambill**

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